

England Genealogy Research Techniques

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The three online resources I search most often to find records for people and places in England:

- Ancestry.com
- FamilySearch.org
- FreeBMD.org.uk (for birth-marriage death certificates and indexes)

Genuki.org.uk is a good website for general reference information to help you with your English research, and for its online gazetteer.

The customary advice when doing English research is to start in the 19th century – find your people in the Census records and civil registration records, and first locate them in the right place – then work back to earlier records knowing you have the correct location. If you can locate your people in the right parish before 1837 (when civil registration began) it is likely you will be able to continue your research in church parish records for perhaps another 200 years. It is important to find your **place** -- whether it's a county, registration district, parish, or a tiny village -- so that you can locate the records you need. Once you know the parish, you have taken a big step forward in advancing your research.

In the Oxford Guide to Family History, David Hey tells us that “England has one of the largest and oldest collections of public records in the world”. Despite that, few English families can trace their surnames back to the Domesday Book, and even fewer can go back to Anglo-Saxon times. But it is realistic for you to expect to find records in the 18th century and earlier.

Three main record groups for genealogy research in England:

- Census records (1841 to present - 1911)
- Civil Registration records (1837 to present)
- Church records - parish registers (1538 to present)

Census records in England and Wales (1841-1851-1861-1871-1881-1891-1901-1911)

FreeBMD for GRO indexes and copies of birth, marriage and death certificates:

www.freebmd.org.uk. Civil registration of birth, marriages and deaths began Sept Quarter 1837.

Registration Quarters

Jan – Feb – Mar: **March Quarter**
Apr – May – Jun: **June Quarter**
July – Aug – Sep: **September Quarter**
Oct – Nov – Dec: **December Quarter**

Example:

Born - 18 December 1943

Registered - 25 January 1944

Index – March Quarter 1944

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To search FamilySearch website for church records (1538 to present):

<https://familysearch.org> > Search > Catalog (search by Place) > select “Church records” from results list

Important Dates/History

1538 Thomas Cromwell, Vicar-General to Henry VIII, ordered each parish to keep a register of births, marriages and burials.

1558 Earliest date of existence for registers in most parishes.

1598 Parish registers required to be kept on parchment and previous registers copied to parchment; Bishops Transcripts began.

1642-1660 Civil War/Commonwealth period – registers kept poorly - many lost.

1733 English was to be used in place of Latin in recording parish entries.

1752 Calendar changed from Julian (Old Style) to Gregorian (New Style). First day of the year changed from March 25 (Lady Day) to January 1.

1754 Lord Hardwicke’s Marriage Act – to prevent “clandestine marriages”; required all marriages to be performed in the Church of England (except for Jews and Quakers); required a separate register be kept for marriages using a printed register book.

1763 Minimum age for marriage set at 16 (earlier only with license from bishop); consent of parents was required for anyone under 21.

1783-1794 Stamp Duty of 3d imposed on parish register entries; paupers exempt.

1812 George Rose’s Act required Church of England baptisms, marriages and burials to be kept in separate, printed register books – registers are essentially the same today

1837 Civil registration began in England and Wales for all births, marriages and deaths (some parish registers continued to be kept and some parishes stopped making Bishop’s Transcripts)

1536	Henry VIII - England and Wales
1707	Act of Union - England, Wales, Scotland = Great Britain
1801	Great Britain + Ireland = United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland
1921	Partition of Ireland = United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
	Great Britain (England, Wales, Scotland) + Ireland (Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland) plus the Channel Islands, Isle of Man, and all other islands surrounding the coast = British Isles

FamilySearch links related to topics covered in this discussion:

- FamilySearch Wiki - England genealogy page:
https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/England_Genealogy
- England Maps Genealogy – FamilySearch WIKI:
http://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/England_Maps
- FamilySearch England Maps -- <http://maps.familysearch.org> (historical maps of England & Wales Jurisdictions 1851)
- England Gazetteers - https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/England_Gazetteers
- England Maps - https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/England_Maps
- FamilySearch research outline for England:
<http://files.lib.byu.edu/family-history-library/research-outlines/Europe/England.pdf>

Selected Bibliography

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Humphrey-Smith, Cecil R., editor. *The Phillimore Atlas & Index of Parish Registers*. Third edition. Chichester, West Sussex, England: Phillimore and Co. Ltd., 2003

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ENGLAND

PRE - 1974 COUNTY STRUCTURE

This map shows the county structure for England and Wales as it existed before 1974.

